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House and Senate Members Disagree Over Baring Spy Budget

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The House Intelligence Committee has voted not to disclose the nation's total intelligence budget despite the Carter administration's support for such a step.

By voice vote at an executive session April 13, the House committee decided not to reveal "any of the amounts of funds authorized for the intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the government."

The move contrasted with the Senate Intelligence Committee's 9-to-8 vote last May to make public the overall spending for the Central Intelligence Agency and related agencies. The Senate committee said it found no convincing evidence that such a step would damage the national security. CIA Director Stansfield Turner said the administration supported the move.

In its report authorizing 1978-79 appropriations for the intelligence community, however, the House committee, headed by Rep. Edward Boland (D-Mass.), said it had found "compelling evidence to convince it that disclosure of budget information as to the intelligence and intelligence-related activities of the government is not justified in the immediate future."

The Senate committee, then headed by Frank Church (D-Idaho), had been on the verge two years ago of publishing the overall spending total at the windup of its investigations of wrongdoing by the CIA and other agencies, but then balked at the last minute by a vote of 6 to 5.

The Constitution states that "a regular statement and account of the receipts and expenditures of all public money shall be published from time to time."

According to authoritative sources,

the U.S. intelligence effort was costing \$4.7 billion a year in direct expenses at the time of the Church committee's report and approximately twice that much when ancillary spending was added in.

The Senate committee's 9-to-8 recommendation last year is still pending, but has yet to be called up for floor action. If the Senate approved it, the spending total for fiscal 1978 would be automatically disclosed, without any need for House action. Senate leaders, however, have shown no inclination to bring the issue up for a vote.

The House Intelligence Committee is currently marking up legislation to control electronic surveillance in national security cases. In what was later described as an accidental violation of House rules, the committee voted secretly to meet secretly Wednesday to discuss the bill.

Rep. Robert McClory (R-Ill.) told reporters later that the committee wound up discussing internal business and "housekeeping" matters instead, but staff members said some "intelligence aspects" of the electronic surveillance bill were also aired.

Under House rules, committees are supposed to vote formally, in open session, before convening a secret meeting. At Wednesday's session, however, spectators were barred from the outset.

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